

Voices from the Upper Gutter

The Middle Episodes

Sidney Hipple

The Man Without an Attitude

Sidney Hipple's spiritual interest started in the mid-70's. It began with him reading books by Edgar Cayce and other supposed New Age writers of the 70's. Then someone turned him on to a magazine article in *High Times* on astral projection, focussing on the experiments of Robert Monroe. This out-of-body experience intrigued Sidney. It captivated his thoughts, not as an obsession, but as a practical purpose.

His reading accelerated when he moved to Lowell from Egg Village, USA. Sidney Hipple claims to come from Egg Chowder, USA, wherever that may be. People have tried to decipher his origins -- without success. His origins, as with Sidney Hipple himself, is an enigma.

An unknown person in Lowell suggested he read the books by Carlos Castaneda and Gurdjieff. He had been going to the Lowell Library and reading books about Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism, and other books about the world's major religions. He enjoyed a couple of things by Krishnamurti. His favorites at that time were: Carlos Castaneda, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, and of course, Zen, and Tibetan Buddhism. The Greater Vehicle and the Short Path always appealed to Sidney.

At one point in the early 80's he attended some introductory meetings of a Boston Gurdjieff Society. These people seemed to have something on the ball, like some intellectual savvy, or at least some deep commitment to something. They talked about what Gurdjieff said about people being machines, and it sounded very fascinating and interesting. He went to all three introductory meetings. But the bottom line was: this organization of Gurdjieff's teachings asked for ten percent of your salary, or a hundred dollars a month, whichever was larger. Sidney Hipple couldn't afford that to associate with these muckety-mucks -- as he would find out that's what they were, years later. He drove a cab part-time.

Two or three years went by, and Sidney checked out the Society again. He was interested in something to join. Like the rest of humanity, he wanted to be part of something, to be with people who

were thoroughly committed to something more than the daily grind of the human meat machine. At the second of these introductory meetings, he saw a flier for another Gurdjieff group. After the last meeting, he went to a meeting of the other group. These people were totally different than the first group. We're going to be getting to the Goldie Locks and the Three Bears situation in a minute here. The first group was so proper, and almost military. You were sure that none of their members smoked cigarettes, drank, cursed, or had any natural deviant side effects from life. The second group -- after the meeting, which was kind of laid back, drank coffee and smoked cigarettes.

Sidney had been stopping at Harvard Square at the Seven Stars bookstore, buying various books by Gurdjieff. A clerk at the counter asked if Sidney had ever heard of the Gurdjieff Foundation. Sidney said no. The man said that he would give him the number the next time he came in. Sidney was checking out all possibilities, and when he went to that second meeting of the laid back group, he got the number and called someone, and was asked to call back in two weeks, which he did. He made arrangements to go down and meet this person he'd spoken to on the phone. This would turn out to be the third bowl of porridge.

He talked to the person and started to attend meetings. It took him several months, maybe as long as six months, before he ever spoke at a meeting with a remark. These people were pretty hip to something, but appeared as ordinary, likeable people. In his three years of involvement, he would participate in all the workdays, and be at all the meetings. Around that time he purchased a \$200 shitbox, and was driving from Lowell to Milton for the meetings, on workdays and on Saturdays. He was *involved*, man, he was involved. He participated in the movements, and that was a friggin strain, baby. But something didn't feel right.

One day, he saw a brochure at the house that a member in his group, the third group, who lived there, had, about yet another Gurdjieff group. It was a book by Idries Shah. For Sidney, reading Carlos Castaneda was a charm, and he even contact somebody from a magazine -- I thin it was *New Age Journal* or something -- who was interested in getting together with people who were into Carlos Castaneda. But the reality of finding in that vein was unlikely. Reading the Gurdjieff books was pretty interesting, but by the time he would ever find the inner meaning to the teachings, would be lifetimes away.

For some reason he bought a book by Idries Shah, and started reading his books. He still belonged to the Gurdjieff group, but was acquiring insights that were beyond his Gurdjieff grade of being. He eventually found it to be phony to belong to the group any longer, and eventually left.

To this day he still enjoys reading books by Idries Shah, and other Sufi publications. Even at the very least, to him they are of

nutritional value. Even in an entertaining atmosphere. This was his private life.

His public life was driving the cab. Working from five in the afternoon till 11 pm or 2 in the morning, for Broadway Cab. An old guy was known to everybody including the fares as Champ. He was probably at least in his sixties, and French Canadian. He had driven a cab in Lowell for over 45 years, and was now a dispatcher. He had a girlfriend that was 21 years old, and rather portly. Some people do anything for a flesh fix, or even the possibility of getting one. And Champ put up with a lot. She was living with Champ, and at one time wanted her boyfriend on the side to live with them.

Champ would confide in Sidney about his personal issues. Sometimes Sidney would get pot to give to Champ for his girlfriend, to make her more responsive to him. Cab drivers are an interesting bunch, let me tell you. Most of them either drink or take drugs, after, or sometimes during work, while driving their cabs. Most of them get paid every day, and live day to day. Some days you have a good day, and may bring home on a Saturday, working at least 10 hours, over seventy or eighty bucks. On a slow day, you might bring home thirty or forty. And the people you pick up are a friggin trip.

During the week at night, Sidney would pick up at the bingo parlors. You could always count on a couple of people going to the same part of town. Or you hit the train station when it comes in -- maybe someone's comin' into town. In Lowell they don't have meters in the cabs -- they work within zones. You can't be honest and drive a cab and make any money. Everybody would pick up clips. A clip in when you pick up a fare and you don't tell this dispatcher and you pocket the money. The trouble would be, that you were supposed to be in one part of town, and you were dropping off in another part of town, and they gave you a call for where you were supposed to be. You'd need to know how to do some quick explaining, or get there as fast as you could.

A cab driver is a cross between a hooker and a bartender. You got to listen to whatever the person is saying, and be their buddy. Or know to keep quiet, if they don't want to be bothered. But to get that tip, you gotta listen to people's problems, and what's happening to them in their life. A lot of people that took the cab were in that middle to upper gutter range that Sidney at that time apparently was stagnating in. A lot of people that take the cabs, don't have much of a life, or a lot of people really interested in them. But to Sidney, they were the soul of society. Sidney was always for the little guy, anyways. One of the worst injustices he sees in the human society, is when other common or ordinary people are excluded from being included in the human race. If he had one objective in life, it would be to recognize the opportunities in life to make the people who he comes in contact with, who don't feel a part of humanity, feel that they are significant. People

live on significance. They wake up for it and have it for breakfast. They talk about it to their friends and their family. They wash it off when they take shower, and it comes out of their ass when they shit. In some cases that can be fine. But when you look at yourself as being the only significant one -- and granted, everybody thinks they're the center of the universe, and rightfully so --

In the past couple of years, Sidney Hipple has developed a style of sculpture using materials from the ocean and the seashore, mostly vegetation. He has called them "Marine Microcosms: the Diogenes Series." He is currently doing a lot of online painting, which are used for cover art for the songs of Lance Gargoyle. Someone turned him on to the novels of Charles Bukowski, which he had read a little about earlier. Since he like reading biographies, he read Bukowski's, and everything else he wrote, except fo his poetry. He has decided to call his gallery "The Charles Bukowski Memorial Online Art Gallery."

He no longer drives cabs, but there may be other stories in the future about those days. He works at a wash and fold laundromat in Lowell, his dream job, and is developing, with Lance Gargoyle, the Orchestra of Life, developed from the Orchestra of Sound.

Oh, I forgot to mention through all of this. His adventure apparently started in Egg Chowder, USA. When someone told him he resembled a person who was called Lance Gargoyle, who lived in Lowell -- this intrigued him, and he moved to Lowell. It took him years to find Lance Gargoyle, because of Lance's elusive nature. But recently he has found Lance, and they have collaborated on this online experience.

But let me leave you with a couple of words from Sidney Hipple: "Nobody wants to feel like a piece of shit. Like nothing they say or nothing they do or nothing they think matters to anyone besides themselves. It doesn't take much to make somebody feel like an active member of the human race. It takes a lot to remember to do it when the opportunity arises."

